

# Child Criminal Exploitation Awareness

## E-WORKBOOK



This workbook is designed to increase your awareness of  
Child Criminal Exploitation

Name	
Job Title	
Agency	
Date	
Email	



# Contents

By working through this e-workbook you will learn:

- what child criminal exploitation is
- what county lines is
- who is at risk of child criminal exploitation
- the push and pull factors and the types of control that can be used
- spotting the signs of child criminal exploitation
- what to do if you are worried about a child or young person
- about what happens following a referral to the North Lincolnshire Children's Services Single Point of Contact
- the purpose of the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meeting

Take your time to work through this e-workbook and answer the questions.

When you have completed this e-workbook, please email it to your manager or safeguarding lead. They will then discuss your answers with you, and will inform the Children's MARS team that you have completed your training by submitting the information on the final page of this e-workbook.



# Introduction to Child Criminal Exploitation

The sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, and in all parts of the world. It affects boys and young men, as well as girls and young women. It can have a serious long term impact on every aspect of their lives, health and education.

Both forms of abuse and exploitation can have a serious long term impact on every aspect of children and young people's lives, health and education. It damages the lives of their families and carers, and can lead to family break ups. The sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people is completely unacceptable.

Both forms of abuse and exploitation can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years and can occur in all communities and amongst all social groups. All practitioners should work on the basis that it is happening in their area. Children and young people who are sexually and/or criminally exploited, or at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, are the victims of abuse and should be safeguarded from further harm. Exploited children and young people should not be regarded as criminals and the primary law enforcement focus should be aimed at the perpetrators of such crimes.

## **Use appropriate language**

Victim blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt, which in turn may lead to a child not disclosing harm they have suffered. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided.

Sometimes, language used brings the significant risk of 'normalising' and minimising the child's experiences and harm suffered and it is vital that we lead the way in representing and advocating for our children and their families.

For more information see the [Children's MARS Mind Your Language toolkit](#)

# What is Child Criminal Exploitation?

There is no agreed statutory definition of child criminal exploitation. In North Lincolnshire, the definition of child criminal exploitation (CCE) is that which:

*Involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a child (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them completing a task on behalf of another individual or group of individuals; this is often of a criminal nature.*

Child criminal exploitation often occurs without the child's immediate recognition, with the child believing that they are in control of the situation. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economical and/or emotional vulnerability.

Children's involvement in CCE is about coercion or desperation rather than choice. CCE is a complex form of abuse and it can be difficult to identify and assess.



# What is County Lines?

County lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or 'deal lines'. It involves CCE as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

County lines is a major, cross cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of government departments, local government agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations.

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.



# Who is at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation?

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, child criminal exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.

One of the key factors found in most cases of child criminal exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (e.g. carrying drugs in return for something). Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).

It is important to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a young person or vulnerable adult does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example, a young person who engages with CCE activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

# Who is at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation?

Any child or young person can be at risk, however those at high risk of child criminal exploitation include:

- Those who have had difficult childhood experiences, which may feature neglectful or abusive parenting, or domestic abuse in the household
- Homeless young people
- Children with low self-esteem
- Children who misuse substances and alcohol
- Children with additional needs, such as those with learning disabilities or mental health issues
- Children in care
- Children whose parents misuse substances or alcohol
- Children who have experienced the death, loss or illness of a significant person
- Children who are from migrant families, refugees or those seeking asylum
- Mostly young men but young women can also become victims



# Push and Pull Factors and the Types of Control that can be used

Children are criminally exploited through a combination of:

**Push factors:** Children escaping from situations where their needs are neglected and there is exposure to unsafe individuals, where there is high family conflict or the absence of a primary attachment figure.

**Pull factors:** children performing tasks for others resulting in them gaining accommodation, food, gifts, status or sense of safety, money or drugs; often the hook is through the perpetrator supplying drugs and alcohol to the child or young person.

**Control:** grooming, violence and threats of violence by those exploiting the child particularly when the child or young person is identified by the police, they are expected to take full responsibility for the offences for which they are charged – i.e. possession and supply of illegal substances.

The majority of children or young people who are exploited believe that they do so willingly, however their involvement is indicative of coercion or desperation rather than choice. Many children do not recognise that they are being exploited or that they are at risk. The majority of children who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation are male however; the possibilities of female involvement should not be dismissed. Criminal exploitation of a child can also involve online abuse.

It is important to note that perpetrators of CCE may themselves be children who are criminally exploited and that the victims of CCE may also be at risk of becoming perpetrators.



# Spotting the signs

The indicators for CCE can sometimes be mistaken for ‘normal adolescent behaviours’. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly and appropriate support is given.

A young person’s involvement in CCE activity often leaves signs. A young person might exhibit these signs, either as a member or an associate of a gang or group dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a young person’s lifestyle should be discussed with them.

In North Lincolnshire the CCE – Vulnerabilities and Risk Indicators Guide should be considered— signs or indicators include:

- Persistently going missing from school or home and/or being found out of area;
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- Relationships with controlling/ older individuals or groups
- Leaving home/care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault/unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Significant decline in school results/performance
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- Self harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing.

You should also remain open to the fact that CCE can occur without any of these risk indicators being obviously present. Also that the presence of these indicators may be explained by other forms of vulnerability rather than CCE.

# Making a referral

## **So, who should you contact if you believe a child is at risk of CCE?**

If you believe that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, significant harm or you are concerned about CCE, then you should always inform Children's Services Single Point of Contact or the police.

North Lincolnshire Council, Single Point of Contact:

- **01724 296500 (9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm Friday)**
- **08081 689667 (free phone)**
- **01724 296555 (answerphone –out of hours and at weekends)**

## **Sharing Information**

Agencies must work together and share information in order to deal with CCE. The effective identification and recording of information and intelligence in relation to individual cases is crucial to the successful disruption and prosecution of perpetrators.

All people involved in the welfare of a child or young person who is suspected to be at risk of CCE should continually gather, record and share information with the appropriate authorities. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported in identifying perpetrators, collecting and preserving evidence (medical, forensic and circumstantial) as well as in supporting their child through the criminal justice process. Such information can form the basis of strong intelligence and

# Response to a referral

## **Children's Services will clarify with you:**

- the nature of concerns
- how and why they have arisen
- what appears to be the needs of the child and family
- whether there are concerns about significant harm
- what is their foundation, and
- whether the child/ren may need urgent action to make them safe from harm

## **Children Services will make an initial decision within 24 hours about whether they complete:**

- an assessment of a child as a 'Child In Need' – section 17 (Children Act 1989)
- a multi-agency strategy discussion as they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm. This may initiate a child protection enquiry under section 47 (Children Act 1989). This may be alongside a criminal investigation by the police



# Multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meeting

## Multi-agency child exploitation meeting

Where there are concerns that a young person may be at risk or suffering CCE, the CCE Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) risk assessment and management tool will be completed by a Social Worker. This will complement the Risk Analysis Framework and be presented for discussion at the MACE Triage meeting.

The MACE Triage meeting determines which children's cases will be discussed at the six weekly MACE Partnership Group:

**The purpose of the MACE Partnership Group is to further assist practitioners in:**

- preventing child exploitation both sexual and criminal
- protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse or who are abused through sexual or criminal exploitation
- disrupting and prosecuting those who perpetrate these forms of abuse and/or crimes against children
- strengthening community safety and resilience especially in specific locations

**The aim of the MACE Partnership Group is to complement, not replace any practices/interventions under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 including referrals to Children's Services, strategy discussions, assessments, child in need/child protection/child in care processes, meetings and reviews.**

# Reducing the harm from Child Criminal Exploitation

## **Supporting a child who has been exploited**

Young people who have suffered criminal exploitation require support that is:

### **Child-centred**

Focusing on the child's needs and involving them in decision making whilst acknowledging that they may not recognise they are in a situation of exploitation or abuse.

### **Involving parents**

Where interventions are necessary, they should support families in making their own plans for the welfare and protection of their children, as long as this is consistent with the safety and welfare of the child.

### **Seeking justice for the criminal acts committed against them**

Criminal exploitation of children and young people should not be regarded as a child or young person making an informed choice but as child abuse, where the responsibility lies with the exploiter.



# Questions

**What is Child Criminal Exploitation?**

**Name three things that a child might receive if they are being criminally exploited by an individual or group?**

**What types of behaviours do perpetrators use towards children and young people?**

**What is 'county lines'?**

**What would you do if you suspect a child is being criminally exploited?**

# Child Criminal Exploitation Awareness

## E-Workbook Completion

Please email this e-workbook to your manager or safeguarding lead who will discuss completion of this training with you. Your manager or safeguarding lead will then confirm that you have completed this training and have sufficient understanding of the topic covered.

Your manager or safeguarding lead will confirm the completion of the e-workbook with the Children's MARS team by filling in the details below and emailing these details to [mars@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:mars@northlincs.gov.uk)

A certificate of completion will be issued on behalf of the Children's MARS Board. Please retain the copy of your e-workbook for your training records.

Name of E-workbook completed	
Name and email	
Job Title	
Agency	
Date of Completion	

If you do not have access to a computer, you can print and complete this e-workbook and send it to your manager who will fill in the details above and post this page to:

Children's Multi Agency Resilience Safeguarding Board

Church Square House

30-40 High St

Scunthorpe

DN15 6NL

*If you do not have a manager or safeguarding lead, a peer or colleague can confirm completion of this e-workbook.*